

## **Groans from the Padded Cell (The Minority Report of the Editorial Rooms.)**

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In the days of the military clan, men were more or less free and equal. An ordeal was necessary for the attainment of manhood; a regular ceremony which was far from a joke. Only the strong and clever could hope to attain the privileges of manhood. There was no specialization of labor. A man had to be able to hunt and fight; a woman to cook and to do the work of agriculture. There was hardly room for anyone but what might be called the normal human being. One particularly lazy fellow, well skilled in flattery, might get a job as tribal bard; but otherwise he would have to work like the rest. As a man got old, beyond the period when skill and experience failed to compensate for lack of strength, he might become an elder by virtue of his wisdom; and, of course, the best all-round man had a good chance of becoming King. But there really was something like equality of opportunity.

Today all this is absolutely changed. Every important branch of work is so specialized that a man must give his whole life to his particular job for 40 years or more before he is capable of holding his own in it. Such a man must obviously be chosen from the start on the ground of inclination and capacity. He must be allowed ample leisure. He must be secured freedom from all worries and anxiety, or he will never arrive at competence. A university education is not nearly enough. It is only a general ground-work. When a man leaves a university he wants at least 10 years uninterrupted work in his particular line before he even begins to succeed in it. In other words, the complexity of civilization demands

an elaborate caste system. For one thing, the *habit of authority* is absolutely necessary to any one who is to fill a position of responsibility. Put a man who has done menial work all his life into an important position. He inevitably becomes a "Jack in office," harsh, overbearing and tyrannical. On the other hand, if you take a boy and give him well trained servants, he will, when he becomes a man, get things done with perfect suavity and good feeling and absence of friction. That is why you can take a boy from Eton or Winchester and send him out to rule a province in India. The "Competition-wallah," the boy of no birth or breeding who obtains a position in the Indian Civil Service by intellectual merit, is a disastrous failure.

There must however, be an end to all this talk of equality of opportunity. It will always be necessary to have a great majority of the population engaged in mechanical tasks. It is evidently quite impossible to give every man and woman even a university education. Most people have to earn their living by the time they are sixteen. Even if this experiment were possible, it would be absurd, because the university education would unfit the average individual for the necessary work of life. It is no good to teach a man political economy and Greek, and then set him to make rivets in a boiler factory for the rest of his life. HOW then are we to make an intelligent selection? The answer is perfectly obvious. Men are not by any means born equal in the matter of intellectual capacity. Take the extreme case of the Hottentot. No amount of teaching will get him to count beyond the number five, owing to the limitations imposed upon him by nature in the matter of fingers. The same holds true to a limited extent even with Caucasians. It is quite true that occasionally nature, in her merry mood, produces a genius from very unlikely material. It may sometimes happen, for example, that a stock which has never exhibited any intellectual distinction at all may get tangled up matrimonially with a lunatic, and by some lucky combination produce a genius.

But we do not know enough about genius to take any practical steps along these lines. We are bound to deal with averages; and there is nothing more certain than this, that ordinary talent, as opposed to genius, is to a very large extent inherited. The main objection to the hereditary principle is that families, after a long series of generations of distinguished men, take to producing degenerates and imbeciles. It is the ordinary biological curve. Now undoubtedly much mischief is wrought by having a caste which is hereditary and nothing more, because the said degenerates and imbeciles interfere with the working of the social machine. Our business is to get the right man in the right place; and the hard and fast rule of primogeniture has in many cases worked badly. One may concede that ultimately it is bound to work badly in all cases.

It seems to me that it would be easy enough to guard against this difficulty. We must have a leisured class, we must have a privileged class, or we can never get good men at all. The most likely candidates are those whose fathers and mothers have achieved distinction. This principle has been recognized in England by the practice of raising distinguished men to the peerage. The idea has been greatly abused by confirming nobility upon the mere plutocrat. Yet when particularly undesirable people have bought these titles, care has taken to make the seat in the House of Lords end with the life of the ennobled bag of money.

But how are we to prevent degenerates and imbeciles from sitting in the highest councils of the nation? By the simple process of clearing them out. It would be easy to arrange for a test of manhood, a public test subject to public criticism, so that no man could assume hereditary privileges without proving by ordeal his right to it. These tests could and should be both physical and mental. These ideas are not opposed to democracy in its true sense. We want the normal man to govern, and the normal man means a man very far above the aver-

age, almost the ideal man, just as normal eyesight is the kind of eyesight that only a very few very lucky people possess.

The socialistic idea that every man is as good as every other man is comic. A great deal of rubbish has been written lately about "secret diplomacy." How can the ordinary man expect to give a sound opinion on the affairs of foreign countries, when the very best men, specially trained for all their lives, are constantly making the most stupid mistakes? "Popular control" is out of the question, even in the smallest business house. How then can we apply it with any common sense to the affairs of a great nation? If the people were free to vote, what would they vote for? Free lodging, free movies and free beer. I myself would vote for free beer. Could you expect the lower East Side to vote money for the encouragement of art or even of science? Of any of the higher branches of human activity? Yet, the whole structure of society depends upon the cultivation of these higher branches. Go and ask the ordinary working man whether he would rather apply the national income to the reduction of rent or to the study of histology! We should never have a cent for anything pertaining to the most fundamental and necessary activities, if the choice were left to the people.

What then is the ideal form of government? The greatest of all the political lessons of history is that society is founded on the family, and the family on the land. A strong agrarian class is the best defense against invasion, physical or moral. "A bold peasantry, its country's pride, when once destroyed, can never be supplied." There is something in the contact with earth and air and water and sun which makes men vigorous. All strong and stable states have had Cincinnatus for a unit. The power of England has always lain in the landed nobility and gentry. Each great estate has been the nucleus of a peasantry with "soul" — with a peculiar pride in itself. The lords of the land, great or little, were also the fa-

thers of the people. Each took a particular and individual interest in each of his tenants.

When this system began to break up, owing to the growth of industrialism and of the power of money, the virility of England broke with it. Fifty years ago the smallest squire had more social consideration than the most wealthy merchant; rightly so, for he was actually a part of the land itself. A rich man could not become a squire by buying land; he became a joke.

But your plutocrat has no anchor in the soil; he calculates coldly that it is cheaper to work a man to death than to look after him. He does not know or care what becomes of those dependent upon him. The idea of solidity of structure is gone from the social system. America dwells in tents like the Arabs, and may as silently fade away. Who in this colony feels in his bones an attachment to ancestral Topeka? We go where the economic tide drifts us; and we do not go back because there is no "back" to go to. Socialism (as most people seem to conceive it) would make matters a thousands times worse — if there's that amount of room for further bedevilment; for Socialism ignores all but the economic factor. Economics appeal only to the shell of men, never to his soul. And it is the soul which determines the action of a true man. A nation swayed wholly by economic considerations is a nation lost alike to God and to man. "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey, Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

The first business of government is to guard the hardihood of the race. So we must see to it that every child is healthy and well-fed, inured to sport, to hardship within certain bounds. The spirit must be free, the passions strong and well regulated, the intellect unhampered by old wives' fables. We must assure to every one the first necessities of life, shelter, food, warmth and the easy exercise of the power of reproduction, without shame or sentimentality.

We must make a firm, almost a paternal bond, between the "lord" and his dependents. If an employer were soundly whipped whenever one of his men or women had a preventable sickness, it would change things considerably! The happiest, the most healthy, the most prosperous class in recent history were the slaves in the South before the Civil War, wherever the owner was a decent Southern Gentleman, and not a Yankee nigger-driver, with no interest in the slaves beyond dollars. If America is to survive, nay, to become a nation, it must be by the development of an enlightened feudalism.

Let us not be frightened by a name! Reginald Front-de-Boeuf was not the only type of Norman Baron. And the world is a very different place today. We have a wretched habit of being scared by words like "royalty," "Socialism," so that we do not trouble to ask what such terms really mean. This is because we mix up our rational thoughts with our sentimental emotions. There was never a moment in the world's history when it was more vitally important to think and to feel as if with two separate organs. "God gave the land to the people," as the little hymn says; but He did not give them brains, or moral courage, or the power of self-analysis. There is not one man in ten thousand who knows whether his consciousness is colored by reason or by passion.

I personally have found this power extremely awkward. Just at present, for example, my heart clings to the great court of Trinity closer than its immemorial ivy. All my imagination is with the England of Harry the Fifth, and with the France of Joan of Arc, and with the Russia of wild and mystic orgies. But my intellect refuses to give assent to some of the propositions made by the Allies. I am ready, with Drake, to singe the King of Spain's beard; or to tear the Kaiser from his gory throne, in a moment of patriotic passion. But I am not prepared to sit down and argue calmly that such actions are ethically right. All hail to the vehemence and fury of war

and of love! But not in these trousers. I must first gird my loins with the saffron philabeg of a dhuine-wassail! As a lover, it gives me extreme satisfaction to riot amid the wine-stained and blood-bedabbled tresses of a Mesalina or a Catherine; but, as a philosopher, I seem to myself to have acted with brutish unreason. I maintain, briefly, that Philip drunk is as good as Philip sober; but I cannot fall into line with the man who asserts that Philip drunk *is* Philip sober. And alas! that man is everywhere. You rightly enough drop nine hundred and sixty-eight million tons of trinitrotoluene upon the head of a Saxon peasant whose only idea of you, till then, has been vague and ill-etched. Perhaps he thought of you as one of the people among whom his Uncle Fritz went to live in 1849. You are right to drop that trinitrotoluene; it is a splendid gesture. But — the morning after? Even Antient Pistol proved amenable. "I'll fer him, and firk him, and ferret him; discourse the same in French unto him!" is followed by the mild acceptance of a modest ransom.

Now this war is not to be settled by appeals to passion and to sentiment. We have got to reconstruct the world on such lines as may be best for all. We must use one quality only — common sense. We have got to be friends with Germany before we sheathe the sword against her. The campaign of hate on both sides is utter wickedness or complete insanity — you pay your shall money and you take your choice. We are not going to listen to the drunken journalist who sneered the other day at the Friends of Irish Freedom as "bartenders and servant girls." His animus was evident, for he attributed the ruin of his mind to the one and that of his body to the other, class. But, on the other hand we must shut our ears to the sentimental wails of the Irish irreconcilables about "Saxon tyrants." This historic injustice business is plain vendetta, and as out-of-date as furbelows, whatever they were.

We must attend to the genuine needs of each nation, and heed not their cries of hysteria. Then, if there

be indeed incompatible needs — (though, in the name of God who made earth so wide and fair, how can there be?) — if there be no way of reconciling England's need of a navy with Germany's need of a place in the sun, then we can go on and fight it out some more. But we shall never begin to think peace till we have got ourselves into thinking, instead of feeling. And we shall never do that until we realize that the two things are different.